



The Keiki



My First Experience With Orchids

by *Pat Dupke*

My husband and I retired to Hudson, Florida from Michigan in 1990. I loved gardening and always grew African violets inside the house. A couple of my neighbors in Michigan grew orchids but I just admired them. The one neighbor grew them in her bathroom while the other neighbor grew hers on pans of rock and water in front of her dining room window.

In the spring of 1991 I was driving down Spring Hill Drive and came across a sign that read Trifles, African violets and more for sale. So excited I stopped in and there was Trudy Duerstock. We talked about violets and she told me about the violet club and invited me to join. Then in May of 1992 the Orchid Lovers' Club of Spring Hill was founded. Of course I had to join and became hooked on orchids, too. My first two orchids were a Paphiopedilum named

Pinocchio and an unnamed purple Dendrobium. The orchid club at this time had a membership of around 50 members and we were all interested in how each one grew their orchids. So on a warm, sunny Sunday morning, September 27, 1992, two of the club members who shared a stilt house on the Weeki Wachee River had an open house. Their orchids hung from cables attached to huge oak trees near the balcony in the back of the house. After arriving around 10:30 a.m., eight of us members walked out onto the balcony to see all of the many beautiful orchids. No sooner had we got out on the balcony when all of a sudden there was a loud cracking sound and the next thing we knew the balcony pulled away from the house, split in two and came crashing down. I was standing



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closest to the house and fell 20 feet to the concrete below landing on my feet and then falling back into a charcoal grill. (X stands for myself in the photo) The other 4 members who were standing next to me landed on top of my legs. I tried to pull my legs out from under them and then I saw a terrifying sight. My right foot was hanging there while my left knee was swelling. I was rushed to Oak Hill Hospital and spent the next 6 weeks there. My right foot was reattached and my left knee was shattered and left ankle broken. After being discharged from the hospital I remained in a wheel chair for a little over a year. Of the eight members who were on the balcony I was the most seriously injured. Yes, this was a horrible beginning but I'm just thankful to be alive and can continue to learn how to care for and grow orchids.

I'm the only original member of the club who continues their membership. I have served on the board of directors of the club for many years and at the present time I'm executive secretary, chaired many committees, especially chairperson of the kitchen during our AOS shows and festivals and I fill-in where ever help is needed.

My collection now consist of many Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilums which grow on my lanai; the Vandas, Dendrobiums, Oncidiums, etc., either grow in a shade cloth greenhouse or in the trees. I guess my favorite orchids would be the Paphiopedilums which I have 14 different ones and Dr. Thomas' Phalaenopsis Species which bloom continuous all year. I don't give my orchids any special attention other than just a little loving care.

I have enjoyed the many day trips the club has taken to many of the orchid growers we have here in Florida plus the weekend trip to the 2006 Redland International Orchid Festival in Homestead, Florida. It's a great time to see many varieties of orchids, ways orchids are displayed, and get help on any problems one has with growing orchids. It has also been a good time to get better acquainted with club members. Not only are my interest with African violets and orchids but I also help my husband out with training and whatever else needs to be done with his racing pigeons. He has over 200 pigeons and he flies them with the Gulfcoast Homing Pigeon Club in Spring Hill which is the largest club in the U.S.A. There are over 250 members in the club

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## **GUEST SPEAKER SEGMENT**

*by Delia Dunn*

Donny and Kathy Stoner from *Touch of Orchids & More* were our guest speakers last month. Donny is an expert at making very unique hand crafted wood and wire baskets and they also carry supplies such as varied sizes of cork, tree fern mounts, wood slabs, dried wood chunks, as well as an assortment of orchid pots. Donny brought in Stanhopea, Coryanthes and Gongora orchids on a hanging rack and spoke a little about each one. They are very similar to each other in culture and growth habits. They are mainly epiphytic, found in damp forests, often encountered near rivers, preferring high humidity and high temperatures (above 50 deg. in winter). They have inflorescences that are pendulous and most people suspend these orchids so the plants must be potted in hanging baskets or similar containers.

## OFFICERS

### President:

Dave Dobson  
352-683-2767  
davetheorchidaddict@gmail.com

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:

Geary Harris  
727-856-0222  
bibleman1948@yahoo.com

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:

Sonia Terrelonge  
352-684-5810  
sewingmom1@bellsouth.net

### Treasurer:

Helen Battistrada  
352-597-0380

### Executive Secretary:

Pat Dupke  
727-856-3485  
pdupke@aol.com

### Recording Secretary:

Sue Caparbi-Taylor  
352-688-1463  
scaparbi@tampabay.rr.com

### Membership:

Yvonne Allen  
352-238-1144  
yallen1@tampabay.rr.com

### Publicity/Librarian:

Linda Roderick  
352-597-3736  
lmroderick@earthlink.net

### Historian:

Linda Hindman  
352-597-1571  
hindman1@bellsouth.net

*Stanhopea (Stan)* is a genus from Central and South America. Their pseudobulbs have one long, plicate (pleated), elliptic (oval) leaf coming from the top. They have intricate structures and mechanisms for pollination and each plant may produce many inflorescences throughout the year. It has spicy fragrant flowers that are short-lived, three days or less. As a result the blooms must attract pollinators very quickly.

The Stoners discovered how the new flower shoots or inflorescences of these upside-down orchids would get stuck between the slats of wooden baskets and he started making his own baskets with wider spaces between each slat. They have open wire baskets with the wire very far apart and in unique cone shapes. Coco fiber would be used in the basket or just around the inside of the basket, to prevent medium from falling through. He said if the leaves are brown on the ends that means they've been dry too long. Acidity is important - they need not be too alkaline and need a pH of 7, which is neutral, to bloom.

*Gongora (Gga)* Come from Central America, Trinidad, and South America, with most species found in Colombia. They are part of the *Stanhopea* family and grow in wide geographical range from wet forests at sea level to mountainous regions in the Andes. The white aerial roots are very thin, growing in a dense pack. Some roots even grow upright instead of hanging down. This helps in forming the ball of aerial roots. They have ribbed pseudobulbs with 2 to 3 apical thin, heavily veined leaves. The inflorescence arises from the base of the pseudobulb and hangs with many upside down flowers on a pendant spike. Many are found in association with ant nests. It blooms in the summer with multiple flowers. A drastic drop of 15 deg. at one time will blast the buds. *Cattleyas* can take the cold better, Donny said.

*Coryanthes (Crths)* (our famous 'Bucket Orchid') grow in ant nests in lowland humid and wet forests. A great website for your reference: *The genus Coryanthes: Munich Botanical Garden* has a wonderful description of this orchid and the symbiotic relationship it has with the

ants, which protect the plant from herbivores as they benefit from nectar in *extrafloral nectaries*, and provide a base for nest construction with their root system. One of Donny's plants had a colony of ants living in it and he explained that the plant was being fertilized naturally with ant feces, which supplied the needed acidity! *Coryanthes* has large ribbed pseudobulbs with 2 or 3 thin veined leaves. We've heard about it previously but I think we were all very intrigued after actually seeing this orchid last month when Kathy Stoner took it around the room to show each of us, while Donny told us the interesting story of how the Euglossine bee pollinates the flowers. Kathy demonstrated for us where and how it traps the little bee and so we all got to see first hand. (*I pictured the plant belonging in the Amazon Jungle and never leaving where those dumb bees are, but here it was in Spring Hill!*)

Donny said that these three types are basically shade plants, like to stay moist and are heavy

feeders. He uses time release fertilizers and did mention 6-month Osmocote when potting these plants. Plants are usually grown in wooden baskets in partial shade in a well drained potting media such as medium-grade fir bark (often mixed with sphagnum peat) or osmunda fiber or with perlite; tree fern fibers, or sphagnum moss. Mix should be moist but not dry. Water in ample quantities is important to produce strong pseudobulbs and prevent foliar spotting. These plants can be sensitive to salt accumulation in the medium, so should never be allowed to dry out entirely, even during the winter months when growth may slow or stop. Poor watering habits can cause root loss in these types, and some may be very slow to re-establish once they have lost their roots. Potting is done best right after summer flowering, as most plants seem to grow year round. Plants that rest in the winter can be repotted in the spring. The best flowerings come from large clumps of plants, so large baskets are usually used. Vigorous plants may need repotting every three years or so. Stanhopea can tolerate more cold than Coryanthes.

There were many questions from the membership about potting orchids in general. Donny went into some explanation about wilting leaves on orchid plants. It could be one of two things and to find the problem you first have to remove the plant from the pot and examine the roots. Either there has been too much water, which has rotted the roots and they'll be soft and brown; or too little water in which case the roots will still be white but not have taken hold, therefore no nutrients will be reaching the leaves. To encourage new roots he will keep the plant out of the pot and sit it on a shelf on a thin layer of sphagnum moss and sometimes he will also soak the plant in a bucket of water with Super Thrive to encourage new growth before letting it sit on the bench - follow directions on the SuperThrive for smaller quantities

He said you can put *SuperThrive* and other hormone treatments in with the fertilizer you're using but he stressed that you do not put insecticides in with your fertilizer as that is a poison. To answer another question he said it didn't matter if too much of a hormone went into the water, it would not do any harm to the plant. A lot of people say to thoroughly water your orchids first before fertilizing to make for better absorption but he says not to do that because orchids can absorb fertilizer into their roots very quickly when they are dry. The question was asked if fertilizing was followed in about half an hour by heavy rain, was there time for the fertilizer to have done any good and he said yes that the roots would have soaked up the fertilizer and the rain would simply wash out any excess salts. Excess fertilizer can make brown ends on leaves and occasionally he will go through his greenhouse with plain water to flush out all his plants. Roots absorb more fertilizer and additives than the leaves do.

Another question was asked about how he re-pots a sphagnum-filled basket that is bound with thin roots of an *Oncidium* and he said he may remove some of the sphagnum if it's dried up and old and replace with new sphagnum or if it's really root bound you might hang the plant upside down and the leaves will turn and grow upwards and the flower stems will turn upwards when they come from the bottom and new stems and leaves will grow from the top and you end up with leaves all around the basket. The other alternative is to remove the long metal pins that are holding the basket together and take the basket apart to remove the plant so it can be placed in a larger basket.

We all learned a few things and since the Stoners were selling various sizes of Stanhopea, Coryanthes and Gongora among other types of orchids, we will be able to find out for ourselves

just what these amazing plants will do.

Something fun to look up: *Extrafloral nectaries*

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Perplexed

By Jeff Rundell

As some of you may recall from my talk to the group in March, my life as a Biology teacher, and not so secret victim of O.D. (orchid dementia), has been a quest that has led to more questions than answers. As part of my rehabilitation I'll try to write about some of these perplexing topics in hopes of reaching out to those of you who are also filled with wonder when you look at an orchid. But it is not looks I'm going to write about. That's right, it's the dreaded "F" word..... Fragrance. I know what you are thinking. Is he trying to get in touch with his feminine side? Let me remind you of at least one reason why women wear perfume. On the other hand, do you find it strange that humans are smitten by the same odors that attract a hoard of buzzing, hard-shelled little six leggers? I want to admit up front that I am enamored with the fragrance of many orchids. I admit that I actually buy orchids solely for their scent. I've done some homework on this topic but you must agree that this is a highly subjective area and some of what I have to say is not pure science. Therefore I would ask any of you who are similarly afflicted to write me some feedback e-mail at jrundell@tampabay.rr.com and please be nice. I only wish there were a way to put scratch and sniff patches on the Keiki. Some cultures seem to value this quality more than others and you would be correct if you guessed the Japanese jumped in first. Other countries have followed. They have orchid competitions based only on fragrance and judges undergo 6 years of training before they become a "master nose". The qualities they score include: 1) intensity 2) gorgeousness 3) elegance and 4) freshness . I have to tell you that numbers 2 & 3 leave me blank.

If you want a better understanding of your sense of smell consider reading poet Diane Ackerman's lyrical book, *A History of the Senses*. She says: "Nothing is more memorable than a smell. One scent can conjure up childhood summers, wild blueberries and the opposite sex". We all realize that most of the animal world depends far more on scent than humans because we are more visually oriented. That is why, in the mammal world, so many noses are close to the ground including even the largest, the elephant. But what about orchid fragrance? What is a scent? These chemicals are extremely volatile and include lipids, aldehyde and ketones. They are stored in the petals and sepals of the flower in specialized osmopheric tissue. One study from Lynchburg College found 3 benzenoids (think paint thinner) in the foul smelling yellow ladyslipper. Some answers seem fairly obvious for instance why do orchids produce scent only at specific times of day? It is obvious they want to coordinate with the time schedule of their pollinators. But look a bit deeper and you will find many of them bloom and produce scent similar to attract either male insects before the actual female insects are capable of producing their own pheromones. Just another example of what I said about orchids being great deceivers. Many orchids produce increasing odor as the blossoms age. Is the plant acting in desperation begging to be fertilized or is it sending a coded message to an insect saying "don't bother stopping it's too late". Many orchids stop smelling abruptly after pollination because producing scent takes lots of energy and can even be toxic to the plant. Some short lived flowers like Gongora can be extended by clipping off the

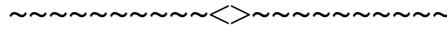
tiny scent bearing trichomes (hairs) from the center of the blossoms. Phrag. orchids actually have different scents dispensed from different parts of the flower. Scents are retained better in warm humid environments and that may be partly responsible for the tremendous number of tropical orchid species. Lots of companies have attempted to capitalize on these fragrances by duplicating them chemically. The most expensive perfumes carry synthetic molecules like Thesaron (a rose ketone) and Hedione an analog to jasmine oil. But the most valuable scents are still natural including the two “holy grails” that the perfume industry has not been able to duplicate; east Indian sandalwood and patchouli. Unfortunately for many flowers, including orchids, air pollutants break apart delicate scent molecules thus limiting their range and the pollinator’s ability to find the source. Humans can detect over 10,000 different scents yet it’s almost impossible to describe how something smells to someone who hasn’t smelled it. These odors can even influence us biologically in areas like hormone cycles. They can also disturb concentration and limit productivity. In the brain the terminus of our sense of smell is the amygdala a prehistoric area connected with strong emotion. In the plant kingdom there is no other family that can match orchids for scent. About 75% of all orchids have odors detectable to us but there may be many more we simply can’t smell. Each scent molecule has a different shape that fits a precise receptor in our nose. An orchid’s fragrance declares that it is fertile, available and desirable. Roses have been bred since ancient times for fragrance but orchids, which are much more diverse, have not. Do we risk losing orchid fragrance when breeders are most interested in other qualities? Will the world of genetic engineering ever be able to transfer the genes of scent to other organisms? I can think of only a couple of orchids like “Sharry Baby” and *Maxillaria tenuifolia* (think coconut) that are known more for scent than blossom. For me the odor of my *Epi. Cochleatum*, the “cockleshell” national flower of Belize, smells like chocolate while my wife’s response is “get that thing out of the house”. I admit there are some pretty foul smelling *Bulbophyllums* but none of them match up to fly pollinated succulent I had called *Stapelia*. I admit to being prejudiced against lots of scents. That includes the dreaded Vicks Vapo Rub my mom smeared all over me which now, I won’t allow in the house.

As I ride my bike around Sugarmill the air is drenched with Jasmine. If I had to choose my favorite native orchid competitor it would certainly be *Epi. magnoliae* (the Green Fly orchid) because, after the sun sets, just a few of the tiny blooms can perfume your whole lanai. Perhaps we should consider having a fragrance competition at our next orchid show? There is still much work to be done on orchid fragrance. Most recently I read that there is a connection between the strength of an orchid’s scent and the saturation of its color. I’m doubtful about that because my particular weakness is for scent of *Encyclias*. They are a bit less heavy than those sweet spicy *Cattleyas* and have an uplifting scent quality that acts a little like caffeine. Mostly I’m sad that, as we age, our sense of smell declines. Yes I’m a little envious of those small dogs everyone is walking. Can you imagine being able to tell by smell everybody in the orchid club apart even with your back turned? Maybe those big feathery antennae that sprout out of the heads of moths seeking white *Brassavolas* at night would look good on us? Darwin wrote: “Orchids appear to have been modeled in the wildest caprice which is no doubt due to our ignorance of their requirements”. As you can see I am still, and will probably always be – perplexed.

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With apologies to the poet Abraham Cowley I'll change one word in a stanza he wrote:

*Who that has reason, and his smell
 Would not among the orchids dwell
 Rather than all his spirits choke
 With exhalations of dirt and smoke*



Show Table

The show table featured many beautiful orchids this month. All who brought their favorite plant to showcase for the rest of us are to be commended for their efforts. If you have an outstanding orchid you would like to share with the rest of the club, I encourage you to bring it in for all to see.

* Denotes ribbon won.

Owner/yrs grower	Genus	Plant Name	Age of plant
Dale Story (15+ Yrs)	Enc.	Cordigera	2 wk
	Lc.	Indigo Mist Cynosure	2 wk
	Unknown	Lyonara Red Head	4 yr
	Phal.	Unknown	3 mo
	Psyp.	?	4 yr
	Onc.	kallhi Green Valley Alba	15+ yr
	Angctm. *	Sesquipedale	8 yr
	Onc.*	Turtle Shell	3 1/2 yr
Judy Smith (11 Yrs)	Phal	DEoritis	1 yr
	Phal. *	Silleriana	4 yr
Delia Dunn (2 Yrs)	E.	Aereford Jewel	6 yr
Sue Caparbi-Taylor (5 Yrs)	Epi. *	Mabel Kabda	4 1/2 yr
Sonia Terrelonge (5 Yrs)	Cym.	Madidum	5 mo +/-
Doug Feingold (5)	C.	Skinneri Alba	\$ yr
Laura Newton (6Yr)	Den.	Parishii	5 yr
	Bulb.	Claptonenswe	5 yr
Linda Roderick (10Yrs)	Paph. *	Lynleigh Koopowitz	1 yr
Barbara Brillinger (8 Yrs)	Lc.*	Cariads Mini Quinee	1 1/2 yr
Pat Dupke (20 yrs)	Paph.	Niveum	12 yr
Jeff Rundell (30 Yrs)	Lpt.	Species	5 yr
	Phrag.	Species	10 yrs
	Brs.	Rex Sakata	10 yr

